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Supervising the C.I.A.

Echoes of last spring's disastrous invasion of Cuba will soon be heard on Capitol Hill. Because the Central Intelligence Agency pulled the strings in that attempt to topple Castro's dictatorship, and because the attempt failed, new life has been injected into an old proposal to subject this super-secret arm of the federal government to a degree of congressional supervision.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee is going to put down for public hearing a resolution sponsored by Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy (D.-Minn.) and co-sponsored by 18 other Democratic senators and three Republican senators. The resolution, introduced shortly after the anti-Castro forces met disaster at the Bay of Pigs last April, would establish a joint congressional committee to exercise "some kind of continuing supervision over foreign policy activities and foreign intelligence . . . programs."

A similar proposal was rejected by the Senate, 59 to 27, in 1956. Sen. Carl Hayden declared then that "Congress has no right . . . to regulate an agency . . . designed solely to provide the President with information to enable him to make decisions." Considerable concern was expressed also lest establishment of such a committee lead to disclosure by members of the committee of information that should be held secret. Yet the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, on which the proposed new joint committee would be patterned, has functioned satisfactorily in another highly sensitive field.

Nearly a score of federal departments and agencies, in addition to C.I.A., have intelligence units of their own or participate in analysis and [illegible] of national security [illegible] particular fields. The Central Intelligence Agency, created by the National Security Act of 1947, is directly responsible to the National Security Council and evaluates on an overall basis the information gathered by its own agents and by other intelligence units.

The focal point of American intelligence gathering naturally is the Soviet Union and things Soviet, and there have been formidable obstacles to surmount. Lack of qualified language and area specialists and the Kremlin's habits of extreme secrecy have made it difficult both to obtain information and to evaluate it adequately. It is estimated that more intelligence is derived today from published documents and standard sources than from clandestine operations and secret agents. More than 200,000 Soviet bloc newspapers, technical magazines, pamphlets, etc., are now screened by the C.I.A. each month.

Information obtained in that manner was supplemented for a time by the celebrated U-2 reconnaissance flights over the Soviet Union. Those flights had to be discontinued when Khrushchev made an issue of them in May 1960. Now, however, the Samos spy-in-the-sky satellite looms as a highly useful intelligence instrument. To be fully operational within a matter of months, the Samos will carry cameras expected to be capable of identifying troop and weapon concentrations and military movements anywhere in the Soviet Union. Its companion satellite Midas, moreover, will supposedly be able to give instantaneous warning of missile launchings. Samos and Midas thus promise to make contributions to national security that will be of inesti-